

Lance Armstrong

An American Legend?

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Summary

This thesis deals with the rise and fall of the American legend Lance Armstrong. The thesis explores the factors that have made him an American legend and the factors that can ruin his status.

At the beginning of chapter one there will be some background information on lance Armstrong as well as a list of key terms from the world of professional cycling. It will also include a review of the literature available on the topic as well as a discussion about the question this thesis will solve.

This thesis offers a completely new angle into why Lance Armstrong has reached his legend status. Lance Armstrong is compared to superheroes in order to see if he shares some of the same traits as them. It turns out he could be seen as a superhero and that it has contributed to his rise. The way his life resembles a movie and some aspects of the American dream have also been important factors in relation to the developing of his legend status. Lance Armstrong's charity, The Lance Armstrong Foundation, is a very important factor that helps to identify Armstrong as a hero. Lance Armstrong is also an active user of twitter and his use of the medium is important when it comes to maintaining his status.

In the second part of this thesis Armstrong's fall is explored. One of the values that have made Lance Armstrong popular is that he is viewed as a family oriented man. However, all his actions have not been in compliance with these values. That includes a divorce and hectic dating activity. These episodes have been both positive and negative for his status as a hero. A huge part of Armstrong's legend status is tied to his seven Tour de France victories. When he came third overall in his comeback in 2008 his status was at risk. Immediately after it became clear he would not win that edition of the Tour de France his legend status fell a little bit. At the same time Armstrong and his team of advisers' exercised damage control and through a series of interviews lance Armstrong was able to restore most of the status he had lost.

The last part of the thesis deals with the doping allegations and investigations involving Armstrong. The current Food and Drug Administration investigation could potentially be very damaging for Lance Armstrong. While the investigation is ongoing

Armstrong's status is falling by the day. If he is found guilty of doping it will not only affect his legacy as an athlete but also destroy his charity. If that happens he will lose his status as an American legend.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Lance Armstrong is perhaps one of the most recognizable athletes in the world as well as one of the athletes with the greatest influence in the world of sports. It is therefore important to take a closer look at this mythic figure Lance Armstrong. The focus of this thesis is to explore some of the most important factors that have made Lance Armstrong an American legend. In addition some attention will be given to the means that make Lance Armstrong able to maintain his status even after he retired from professional cycling. Towards the end the focus will shift towards Lance Armstrong's potential downfall and how that will affect his status. The thesis will explore aspects from Lance Armstrong's rise to legend status to his potential downfall.

This thesis will provide an answer through pursuing an angle that has never been tried before. It will explore the literature relating to superheroes in order to see if it can help explain Lance Armstrong's rise towards the status as an American legend. This thesis will also use the more conventional and available literature that deals with Lance Armstrong directly. It will also take a closer look at how new technology and social media sites online have influenced the status of Lance Armstrong and how his use has influenced his status. In order to provide an answer the thesis will combine using a completely new angle, exploring the role of social media Internet sites and also use a more traditional approach.

Background information

Even though Lance Armstrong is a name and face that is recognized by many it will be useful to incorporate some background information about him. The background information will be helpful for the reader when reading the rest of the thesis. In addition a short list of key terms from the world of professional cycling is included.

Lance Armstrong was born in Dallas and raised by his mother Linda who was only seventeen when she gave birth to him. His biological father left when he was two years old. Because she was a young single mom they had a tough time getting by. Lance discovered his talent for endurance sports partly because his mother could not afford to drive him or did not have the time due to work, to give him a lift to his swimming lessons. He quickly excelled in swimming and reached state level. As he had to use his bike to reach the swimming pool he

discovered his talent in cycling. He started entering triathlon competitions and faked his identification papers so that he could compete against athletes that were older than him. When he was a junior, meaning that he was under 18 he competed against other athletes from 18 years of age and upward. He managed good results and that earned him the nickname junior. His talent for endurance sports was obvious.

As he grew older he focused on cycling and quickly rose to the top in the USA. He was a member of the USA cycling squad for the first time during the Junior UCI world championships in 1989. At the time he was only 18 years old.¹ Later he joined the US national team for professionals and the Subaru-Montgomery team in 1990. He has also raced four years for Motorola, one year for Cofidis, 5 years for U.S. Postal, two years for team Discovery Channel Pro Cycling, one year for Astana and two years for team RadioShack. All his Tour de France victories came when he rode for the U.S. Postal and the Discovery Channel team which was the same team as the U.S. Postal. The only difference was the sponsor and team name. All teams except for the French Cofidis team and the Kazakhstani Astana team have been American based. Lance Armstrong was also highly competitive in traditional one-day races in Europe. In addition he became the youngest person ever to win a stage in the Tour de France. That happened the same year he became world champion in Oslo. At that point he was only 21 years old and showed a huge potential. After winning several other big races in the following years he was diagnosed with testicular cancer at the age of 25. The cancer had spread to his lungs as well as to his brain. He was given a slim chance of survival. He did survive and returned to cycling within two years of his diagnosis and went on to win his first Tour de France in 1999. He won a total of seven Tour de France victories in a row. That is more than any other cyclist have ever done.

While he was still recovering from his cancer diagnosis Lance Armstrong founded the Lance Armstrong Foundation. It is a foundation that has grown big and has now expanded its operations to a global scale. The organizations goal is to offer resources for every aspect relating to cancer. Lance Armstrong is the face of the operation and is largely involved in representing and working for the organization. Today Lance Armstrong has 5 children. He has Luke, Isabelle and Grace with his former wife Kirsten Richards and Max and Olivia with his current girlfriend Anna Hansen.

¹ USA Cycling, Lance Retires After Legendary Career Spanning over 2 Decades. USA Cycling, <http://www.usacycling.org/news/user/story.php?id=5906>, accessed on 03.08.2011.

Throughout his career Lance Armstrong has experienced numerous allegations that he used performance-enhancing drugs in the years prior to and including the years he won the Tour de France. He has however never tested positive for anything and stated that he has never used any drug to boost his performance. Unfortunately it is not that easy to say that he did not use doping products as there are evidence and testimonies that suggest otherwise.

Key Terminology

This thesis is about Lance Armstrong who is primarily known for his accomplishments within the sport of cycling. It is therefore useful for the reader to know some key terminology from the world of professional cycling.

UCI – Union Cycliste Internationale

Domestique – A rider who is only there to help and support the team leader. E.g. get water bottles from the team car and bring it to the leader during a race. He could also position himself in front of the leader in order to reduce the amount of wind hitting the team leader.

Peloton – the main field or group of cyclist in a race.

Time trial – each rider starts separately in a race against the clock. It is a single start, not a mass start as it is in a normal race.

Breakaway – a sudden attack or forward movement in a bike race. It is a breakaway when a rider tries to break free of the peloton.

Rollers – A device you put your bike on in order to cycle while remaining stationary. Used when training indoors.

Stage race – is a race with more than one stage. It can last from two days to three weeks. The finishing time from each stage is added up and the one with the lowest time after the last stage is the winner.

Tour de France - a French race for professional cyclists held since 1903, covering approximately 3,000 miles (4,800 km) of roads in about three weeks, renowned for its mountain stages. It is the biggest annual sporting event in the world. Tor de France is considered to be the most important race of the year for the stage racers.

General classification – if you win the general classification you win the whole race. It is the ranking that says which rider who has used least time to complete a stage race.

Triathlon – a competition that consist of a swim leg, a bike leg and a finishing running leg.

A classics race – a traditional one-day event where the distance is often over 240 kilometers.

Review of Literature

The primary sources that will be most important for this thesis are the two books Lance Armstrong has co-authored with Sally Jenkins. The lesser-known name of the two, Sally Jenkins, has worked as a columnist for the Washington Post. She has also won the Associated Press's Columnist of the Year Award. In addition to the two books she has written in companionship with Lance Armstrong she has also co-written several other sports books that have sold well.² Her function in writing these books is that of a ghostwriter. The two books in question are called *It's Not About the Bike* and *Every Second Counts*. As they are primary sources they offer the best insight into Lance Armstrong's life. They offer first hand insight into his battle with cancer as well as a behind the scenes look at how he experienced the Tour de France. In these books Lance Armstrong explains how he felt and dealt with the doping allegations that came up during 2005 and offers his perspective on the issue. The two books also let us in on a personal level as one can experience the husband and family man Lance Armstrong. During work with the two books Sally Jenkins and Lance Armstrong became good friends. Their friendship might have contributed to making the books so personal. On the other hand, it might have made her deal with the doping allegations in a more cautious way than she would normally have done. However, the books are written in cooperation with Lance and it would have been unnatural to push him too hard on those subjects. After all, they do deal with the topic in a decent manner.

The books illustrate how cancer, marriage, children and the successful return to the sport have changed him and the way he lives his life. The books are more than just a story about his life after cancer. It is perhaps more of an inspirational book that focuses on how one

² Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *Every Second Counts: From Recovery to Victory*, (Australia: The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, 2003), First physical page of the book.

should live life to the fullest. Among cancer survivors the first book in particular is known simply as “The Book”.³

In *It's Not About the Bike*, the reader is introduced to Lance Armstrong's own recollection of his childhood and formative years. It offers access to his own feelings and thoughts from when he was growing up. Armstrong also describes how it was to live with a stepfather who was not only cheating on his mom, but also physically abusing him with a belt as a form of reprimand for actions one usually would expect and allow from a child. The insight this book offers to his childhood when it comes to both his personal life as well as what has to be regarded as the start of his professional life is of great value for this thesis. The book is important because clues from Lance Armstrong's childhood can have influenced the choices he has made in his adult life. His childhood is therefore important in relation to his rise towards becoming an American legend.

As the title suggest, this book is not just about the bike. It is about surviving. Not only about surviving cancer, but surviving and overcoming whatever obstacle one might face at a particular time in life. It offers a truly personal account of how he fought cancer and won. The book reaches full cycle when Lance Armstrong is able to return to life. He marries Kristin and they have their first baby. He also goes on to win his first tour de France, only two years after being diagnosed with testicular and brain cancer. Winning the tour de France is his ultimate proof that he is healthy and that he has made a comeback to life.

In his second book, *Every Second Counts*, Armstrong and Jenkins start up where they stopped in the first book. What is different in this book compared to the first one is that it deals with how Lance Armstrong handled life after surgery and after cancer. It focuses a lot more on cycling and how he was able to come back to an even higher level than he had been on before. One can obtain much more information about cycling related topics in this book. That includes his training, his preparations and doping allegations made towards him. This book is like the first one, very open and personal. However, it is so in a slightly different way. Here we get very close to his personal life. We can read about how Lance Armstrong struggles to balance his personal life and his professional life.

During Lance Armstrong's career many books and articles that deal with the darker side of the American legend Lance Armstrong has been published. The problem is that they

³ Sal Ruibal, Cancer Survivor Armstrong Accepts New Role. USA Today, 05/22/200, <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/cycling/2002-05-22-cover-armstrong.htm> (accessed on 07.12.2010)

are often not as nuanced as one would have hoped. They often start out with an opinion, for example that Lance Armstrong has used performance enhancing drugs and stick to that throughout the book only presenting the evidences that fits their side of the story. Journalist or other personnel are often known for either disliking or liking Armstrong. It is important to be aware of that when reading literature in this category. A famous book that would represent the dislike category is *L.A. Confidential- Les secrets de Lance Armstrong*. The book is a summary of all the doping allegations that have been made against Armstrong as well as theories and testimonies from people who have worked with Armstrong. A good source for material from a person belonging to the other side is all publications coming from Don Catlin. He is a famous anti-doping researcher and he has been known to be very positive towards Armstrong and his accomplishments. In recent years the most revealing news on Armstrong when it comes to his potential involvement with doping has come in magazines. Sports Illustrated was the magazine that brought the news of the latest Food and Drug Administration investigation into Armstrong and his U.S. Postal team in the period 1999-2004.

Since Lance Armstrong has reached the position he has today there are numerous books that deal with everything from how he trains to how you can use Armstrong as an inspiration to be a better version of yourself. Most books in this category fails to provide information about why Lance Armstrong is an American legend. They do not go any deeper than just retelling episodes from his life. They do not take these episodes and try to see how they have been important or not in making him a legend. This thesis will explore Lance Armstrong in that gap.

In order to find a new angle when writing this thesis, literature that deals with superheroes in fiction will be consulted. When Lance Armstrong is on a bike, his performance might resemble that of a real superhero. There are also other aspects from his life where one can see parallels between the fictional superheroes and Lance Armstrong. Using this new angle will shed some light on some of the aspects that has contributed to making him a legend. Since it has not been done before there is no specific literature that deals with Lance Armstrong in relation to fictional superheroes. Books that deal with traits of the fictional superhero will be consulted.

In order to fully understand Lance Armstrong it is necessary to know why he is so fast on a bike. This thesis will therefore explore the physical attributes of Lance Armstrong. The literature on the topic includes the two primary sources mentioned as well as sources one can

find from his long time coach Chris Carmichael. There are also a lot of books that are concerned with the training regime followed by Lance Armstrong. Many of them have been extremely popular, and even more so when he won more and more Tour de France victories. In this category there are many books who claim to use the training principles of Lance Armstrong, but that can not actually prove or document that Armstrong uses the training.

Chris Carmichael has published several books that gives information about what kind of training regime Lance Armstrong used in the months before winning his first Tour de France as well as how he trained in the years that followed. Lance Armstrong himself was a co-author with Carmichael on the book, *The Lance Armstrong Performance Program: Seven Weeks to the Perfect Ride*. The information about Lance Armstrong's training one can get from his books is broad. They include other factors of Lance Armstrong's training that is often missing in other literature. They include aspects such as how he ate, how he spent a lot of time on reconnaissance the important Tour de France stages, how he prepared mentally and so on. Many of Lance Armstrong's physical tests are posted on the Internet. The test results available on the Internet are reliable if one is selective when choosing which sites to trust. Articles by doctors who have tested him are a great source for information.

In a theses like this, which tries to figure out the reasons for why Lance Armstrong has reached legend status it can be usefully to consult the relevant literature that deals with American icons, heroes and celebrities. An important bit of information in itself is that Lance Armstrong is not included in many of the works that deals with American icons. Lance Armstrong often fills the content of a whole book on his own. However, he is included in some of them. It could be interesting to look at older books and compare one of the biggest athletes of a previous era to Lance Armstrong who is one of the biggest athletes of this era. It could be useful for this thesis to, for instance, compare the status of Muhammad Ali to that of Lance Armstrong in order to see if they share some common traits.

What Question Will this Thesis Solve?

This thesis seeks to identify the most important factors that contributed to Lance Armstrong's rise to an American legend. The thesis will also see how he maintains this status as he now has retired from the sport. The second part of the thesis will seek to take closer look at Armstrong's potential fall and how a fall might influence or change his status as an American legend. The general outline of the literature above this paragraph does not offer enough insight into the specific factors that made Armstrong a legend. When it comes to Lance

Armstrong's potential downfall some of the sources indicate consequences but do not reach any conclusion when it comes to how it will affect his status as a hero. This thesis will serve that purpose.

Why is this Question Important?

Answering these questions is important in order to reach a deeper understanding of a very complex person. It is important because icons like Lance Armstrong are often seen as having been icons their whole life when there are many, and often complicated factors that have contributed to their rise over a long period of time. In Lance Armstrong's case many think they know why he has reached this status. They see him as a cancer patient who survived cancer and then became one of the best athletes in the world. Of course, that is a large part of the reason, but what is interesting is to try to see beyond that, why does that make him an icon, a hero or legend?

What Knowledge Will Come out of this Thesis?

The knowledge about Lance Armstrong that comes out of this thesis will be valuable to a person who has a mostly positive image of the great athlete Lance Armstrong in the sense that it might make their impression of him more nuanced. The same applies the other way around. If a person has a very negative view of Lance Armstrong and perhaps only view him as a doper this thesis will hopefully reveal other more positive aspect of Armstrong that they did not know about.

Chapter 2

Lance Armstrong's Rise

The eventful life and the astonishing achievements of Lance Armstrong have clearly fascinated many people. There are of course many, complicated reasons for why Lance Armstrong has reached the status of an American legend. The beginning of this chapter will explore the literature that deals with superheroes in order to see if there are any connections between the fascination many people have for superheroes (in different mediums) and the fascination many people have for Lance Armstrong. Hopefully this will provide a completely new angle on why Lance Armstrong has reached his status as an American legend. By using this angle my goal is to discover if Lance Armstrong has some of the traits one would identify in a superhero and whether or not that is a factor that has made him more popular. Is he a living superhero?

Characteristics of a Hero

In order to get into a discussion about Lance Armstrong and superheroes it is important to try to establish what a hero is. To come up with a clear cut definition of hero would not be easy. It is difficult because different people as well as different situations would change whom people see as a hero or what people see as a heroic act. However, there are some common factors that are often identified with heroes/superheroes.

A person can be defined as a hero because of many different actions. One often hears the word hero about people who has gone beyond their known limits and done something extraordinary.⁴ A firefighter would be a good example. Yet another form of hero could be a hard working nurse or teacher, simply because they do a hard and important job. It is also easy to relate to the fact that it is highly likely that we have seen ourselves as a hero in our own life at one or more times. Just getting through a hectic week may induce that feeling. It is possible to be a hero on many different levels. The definition of hero depends on the situation. As a form of summary of some of the points above it could be possible to say that a hero is "...a standard to aspire to as well as an individual to be admired".⁵ This definition of a hero is

⁴ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 14

⁵ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 14.

a very broad one and it would be fairly reasonable to say that Lance Armstrong is a hero according to that particular definition. That would apply both to his professional career, his fight against cancer as well as his involvement with his charitable organization. However, the different points and traits of what it takes to be a hero that have been mentioned above are true for the living heroes we find around us every day. When it comes to superheroes (fictional), the same traits also apply to them, but they often have other traits that are different from those of living heroes. It is in this particular cross-section it will be interesting to see if Lance Armstrong has some of the same traits as the fictional superheroes, either fully or to some degree.

Danny Fingeroth suggests in his book that when the term “hero” is used about sportsmen or musicians the term means that we have a fascination for the person, but it does not necessarily mean that that person has “...exhibited selfless bravery in the face of near impossible odds and life-threatening consequences”.⁶ This is the case for the majority of sportsmen and musicians today. Many of the stars of today have become stars because of their talent alone and not because of talent plus some sort of heroic act. There are even examples of musicians or bands that have been specifically designed by a record label and are basically famous for being famous. A group like Spice Girls is a good example. They might have been heroes for many of their fans, but not in the sense that is discussed here.

Lance Armstrong is one of the few athletes in the world that can be put inside that category of “bravery and facing near impossible and life threatening odds”. Already at this point, before we really get into the heroic traits of the fictional superhero, there is some evidence that suggests that Lance Armstrong might be a bit unusual, since he as an athlete, might be seen to fit into the more traditional definition of a hero. He is not just a hero because he is good at sports, but he is so because he has showed bravery in a situation where he faced a life threatening condition of cancer. It is not possible to separate Lance Armstrong as an athlete from Lance Armstrong as a cancer survivor. The fact that so many people are aware of his history as a survivor of cancer makes his accomplishments on the sports arena even more impressive. Compared to other athletes that have reached the top facing less challenges than Armstrong, his accomplishments might seem more real or deserved. Even though athletes’ history should not (ideally) influence how his athletic performance is valued, it is highly

⁶ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 16.

likely that it does. We tend to root for the person we think deserve to succeed. A good illustration of this is the American skater Dan Jansen. Before the 1988 Olympics in Calgary, Dan was one of the big favorites for the 500-meter as well as for the 1000-meter event. Just a couple of hours before his start he got a call that informed him that his sister was dying. Later that night he got a new call that informed him that his sister was dead. He fell on the 500-meter, the same happened during the 1000-meter. In the 1992 Olympics in Albertville he was once again the favorite as well as the world record holder on the 500-meter. He ended just short of a medal. The Olympics at Lillehammer in 1994 would be his last chance at a medal. He had been by far the best skater on the 500-meter that season. Nonetheless, he came in as number eight. However, on the 1000-meter he finally got his revenge and gold medal as he not only won, but also set a new world record. He dedicated his win to his dead sister. It was a win that most people interested in skating felt was truly deserved. Dan Jansen's touching story had also reached outside the world of sports. President Bill Clinton called the stadium to deliver his congratulations personally to Dan Jansen. It is common for a President to send a telegram to congratulate whenever an athlete takes a medal in the World Championships or in the Olympics. It is not common for the President to call directly to the stadium in order to congratulate a certain athlete.

This is a good example of how much feelings and emotions that are involved in sports. Dan Jansen was a very good skater, but did not have the merits anywhere near some of the other skaters. Despite this he is considered a true champion or hero along the same lines as more famous skaters such as Eric Heiden and Shani Davis. Dan Jansen's struggle to win is a vital factor and a factor that fascinates the public. I think the same effect is there for Lance Armstrong. In fact it is perhaps even stronger. Lance Armstrong as an athlete can not be separated from Lance Armstrong as a cancer survivor when it comes to his position as an American legend. I think it is fair to say that Lance Armstrong would not have reached the status of an American legend if he had not had his encounter with cancer.

Almost every superhero has a nemesis. It may be argued, in superhero-terminology, that Lance Armstrong's nemesis is cancer. Superman had kryptonite and Lex Luthor. In a way, the nemesis often defines the superhero. This might be because they often represent or stand for the complete opposite view compared to the superhero. I would not go as far as saying that cancer defines Lance Armstrong. He is way too complex a person to make such a statement about. However, cancer has definitely been a large part in defining who he is.

Perhaps, it could be the single most important factor that shaped him into the man he is today. Therefore, one might say, it has been central in making him an American legend.

Like a nemesis or an archenemy, cancer will always lurk in the back of Lance Armstrong's mind. He will always have the fear that the cancer could come back one day.⁷ The fear of the unknown or a fear of what might be or might come is something most people struggle with from time to time. Lance Armstrong is a very good role model for how to address those fears and make the best out of the situation you are in. Lance Armstrong keeps his hair trimmed short as a reminder of cancer. He does this in order to remind himself of what has been and to live life to the fullest. He is a symbol of acknowledging a difficult past and to use it in a positive and constructive way in order to live as meaningful as possible in the future. There is a difference between uncertainty and anxiety compared to real fear. When Lance Armstrong needs to check for vital signs, to check that he is still alive, to check that he is living the life he wants, he dives headfirst into a mineral pool deep inside the forest in Texas. Here he reassures himself that he is not living life in a daze. He is truly living. "At what point do you let go of not dying? Maybe I haven't yet and maybe I don't want to".⁸ What he is saying is that we should never completely let go of our real fears because they help us maximize life. Lance Armstrong says if he could choose between winning the Tour de France and cancer, he would have chosen cancer. What he could mean by that is that cancer gave him a second chance to live life 100%, a chance to do it right and a chance to really apply himself. Winning the Tour de France represents that. It is possibly the best way to prove that you are alive. By winning the Tour de France he illustrates to everybody who is facing a difficult time that they can get through it and live a better life

Traits of Superheroes

One trait that can be found in many superheroes is that they can carry out their superhuman acts of heroism because they want to. Many superheroes are not obliged to use their powers in order to help other people, but something within them say that they should do so. It is their will power that enables them to do the heroic acts. Spider Man rushes to help an old lady who is being robbed because he wants to. It is his inner justice that drives him. Superheroes act on

⁷ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 15.

⁸ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *Every Second Counts: From Recovery to Victory*, (Australia: The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, 2003), 1.

the basis of determination and an intense will power.⁹ Not all superheroes are extremely big, as for example the Hulk, but some, like Superman or Batman, are the size of a regular person, but they seem to be able to extract superhuman amounts of power from within when the values they represent are at risk. They are able to use that energy and power because they *want* to. If there were some words that can be used to explain Lance Armstrong's life and career, willpower and determination would definitely be two of them. He made his fight against cancer personal. He talked to it and educated himself on every possible aspect of the disease in order to beat it. He made himself an expert on the subject.¹⁰ He decided to win and did.

Lance Armstrong is like almost every superhero we encounter in fiction. He is a survivor. A trait of superheroes is that they do not die. They might feel tired for a short time after saving the world or protecting the population from some sort of abuse, but they will not die.¹¹ One can always count on them to recover and return to their normal selves. In that respect, Lance Armstrong goes beyond the traits of the fictional superhero. Before he got ill, he had managed to become world champion in Oslo. After he surprisingly survived cancer he returned to the sport and within 18 months secured his first Tour de France victory. It is hard to put different victories up against each other, but it is clear that you need to be a more complete bike rider in order to win the tour de France than you need to be in order to win the world championship. To win the Tour de France a rider need to be a very good climber as well as a very good time trial rider. A rider who wins the Tour de France has no real weakness as a bike rider. A rider who wins the World Championship can be the same type of rider who manages to win the Tour, but he could also be a sprinter. More riders are capable of winning the World Championship than winning the Tour de France since it is a one-day event.

Lance Armstrong had returned stronger than ever before. He then went on to confirm that with a record breaking 6 more Tour de France victories. In addition, Lance Armstrong has suffered numerous crashes during races and training. Even when he cracked his skull open

⁹ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell us About Ourselves and Our Society* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 18.

¹⁰ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 131.

¹¹ Danny Fingeroth, *Superman on the Couch: What Superheroes Really Tell us About Ourselves and Our Society* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 18.

during a training ride in the Alps he survived and was back on the bike after a short break.¹² It seems that nothing can stop him from riding his bike.

Superheroes can represent immortality. The same can be said about Lance Armstrong. On the other hand, he might to a larger degree represent the ability to survive hardship. Superheroes are not just immortal but they seem to be immune to aging as well. If they do seem to get older it is rarely by more than a couple of years. Of course, when it comes to Lance Armstrong we know and can see that he is getting older. On the other hand, I think he can represent youth and immortality in the same way as superheroes. Even though the look of Lance Armstrong has changed, but as he has gotten older his actions still symbolize youth. At the age of thirty-eight he came out of retirement and returned to professional cycling once again. He was 3rd in the Tour de France that year. He has also got another child as well as invested even more time in the Livestrong organization. He does not seem to slow down. That is one of the many reasons why Lance Armstrong is an American legend. People can identify with the desire to keep up the pace even though they are getting older. Another consequence of his continuing high activity level is that he is constantly keeping himself interesting and in the spotlight. That may contribute to keep his status as a hero/legend not only with the generations living now, but also help new generation to know about him. Lance Armstrong's high exposure in the media, as an athlete, a cancer fighter or a private person is a type of immortality. Every time he appears on television or in a newspaper he becomes even more immortal.

Even as a child he showed the ability to quickly master new things if he really wanted to. When he started swimming he was so bad at it that he was put in a group with children who were 2-3 years younger than him. He did not mind and within a year he was one of the best swimmers in the state of Texas. To be able to go from being a complete novice to one of the best in the state in just a year shows that he had an impressive will to succeed even as a child. It is also important to keep in mind that he was also one of the best in the sport of running and cycling. Tied to Lance Armstrong's childhood is another aspect one can find with superheroes. Their biological parents are often more or less absent or gone. This was the case for Superman. That results in episodes where they have to find out for themselves how to use

¹² Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 272.

their specific powers.¹³ No one is there to help or guide them. This was also the case for Lance Armstrong. He grew up without his father who left before his second birthday. Since his mother had to work long hours in order to support them both, Lance Armstrong was left on his own to discover his talents and powers. He rode his bike in order to reach the swimming pool and discovered that he was good at almost everything that was hard and lasted for a long time. Growing up without a father has made him very aware of the kind of father he would like to be himself. Even though he has gone through a divorce; the general impression of Lance Armstrong is that he is a very family oriented man. To be associated with the values of a traditional core family is a very important factor that has been crucial in building up his legend status. The values associated with being a family man are values that you can hardly go wrong with and at the same time is something people can relate to almost everywhere in the world. It does not matter if it is in the USA or in Europe. Everybody can relate to how important the family is.

Professional Career

A huge part of the reason why Lance Armstrong has become an American Legend has to do with his astonishing athletic performance. Therefore it can be useful with some insight into his professional career. He is most famous for winning the Tour de France. Not once or twice, but seven times. In addition to that he managed to take all the wins in a row. From 1999 - 2005 he was the winner of the biggest annually held sporting event in the world. It is an accomplishment that is almost unbelievable. The former record for most Tour de France victories is 5 and was shared by four of the best cyclist that has ever lived. It is doubtful if the world will ever see a rider take 7 straight victories in the Tour de France again. There are no races that even come close to the Tour de France when it comes to prestige. The one who probably will come closest is the World Championship. Lance Armstrong has also been World Champion. He became world champion at the age of 21, the same year he became the youngest stage winner in the Tour de France.¹⁴ It was a very hard race under treacherous conditions in the area around Oslo. Lance Armstrong focused on and scheduled his whole year around the Tour de France, but he also has many victories from lesser known, but prestigious races. He became the first American to win a major classics race when he won the Classica san Sebastian and he was also the first American to win the very prestigious Belgian

¹³ Richard Reynolds, *Super Heroes: a Modern Mythology* (London: B.T. Batsfor Ltd., 1992), 12.

¹⁴ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 59.

classic La Fleche Wallone. He also achieved a bronze medal in the time trial in the 2000 Olympics. Other victories include Tour de Suisse, Criterium de Dauphine Libere.¹⁵ That he was able to win one-day events and some of the mini tours no longer than 5-7 days showed that he was a complete rider. That he was able to take the leap to become Tour de France winner was surprising. A lot of it had to do with the way cancer changed his body. When he returned to race fitness after cancer, his body was 7 kilos lighter than it was before he got sick. Before cancer Lance Armstrong carried a lot more weight in his upper body as a result of being a swimmer and football player when he was younger.¹⁶ That muscle mass did not return when he started cycling again. It is a huge advantage to not have to carry those extra seven kilos up a 50-minute climb in the Tour de France. He was therefore ready to make the leap from a classics and mini-tour rider to a grand tour rider.

Lance Armstrong's Body

A previous section of this thesis explored and compared traits from superheroes with Lance Armstrong in order to see if one could find some clues that could explain his popularity and legend status. This section moves away from the superhuman element and explore Lance Armstrong's body. Some of the fascination with Armstrong is related to his extreme ability to ride a bike fast and for a long time. That has to do with the positive connotations most people have when thinking of a bicycle. It could be remembering the freedom it represented when you were a child or simply that it offers a cheap and green alternative to other means of transportation. Almost everybody has used a bike and it is therefore easier to relate to Armstrong as a cyclist. Even though many Americans might not be too familiar with the competitive aspect of the sport they have their own experiences to build on when watching Lance Armstrong. Therefore, it is important to take a closer look at the engine that moves his bike. The following section will explore the capacity of Lance Armstrong's body.

Lance Armstrong is a superhero in the sense that he shares many of the same traits as superheroes. On his bike he might even look like a superhero, but we know very well that he is a human being like everybody else. However, there is something in his genes that enables him to be extremely efficient as well as fast on a bike. When competing in all endurance sports it is important to have a high V02 max. This is a measurement of a person's maximal

¹⁵ Cycling hall of fame, Lance Armstrong, http://www.cyclinghalloffame.com/riders/rider_bio.asp?rider_id=30, accessed 12.01.2011.

¹⁶ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 21.

oxygen uptake. The more oxygen an athlete can get into his body and send to the muscles, the faster one will be in an endurance sport. The amount of oxygen an athlete can utilize is a key factor for long distance sports. However, a high score does not necessarily mean that a person is good at endurance sports. Other factors like economy, meaning how much oxygen does the body need to use in order to keep a certain speed, is also very important. Maximal oxygen uptake is measured in milliliters per kilogram of body weight per minute (ml/kg/min). This means that the lighter an athlete is the easier it is to get a good score. A normal person would have a score of about 40-50 while Lance has a score of 83 or higher.¹⁷ An athlete need to have over 80 in Vo2 max in order to have the opportunity to be highly competitive in long stage races like the Tour de France. If an athlete has a Vo2 max that is lower than 80 it is not possible to stay with the best riders on the long climbs. A full bread sprinter could be competitive on the flatter stages with a lower V02 max. Lance Armstrong's Vo2 max is not uncommon at all for top-level endurance athletes. Norwegian cross-country skiers Tore Ruud Hofstad and Espen Harald Bjerke have tested as high as 92 and 96, which are some of the best results ever recorded.¹⁸ Many of the former winners of the Tour de France have also had a higher maximal oxygen uptake than Armstrong. Greg LeMond has measured as high as 92.5 while Miguel Indurain has measured 88.¹⁹ So it is not Armstrong's Vo2 max capacity alone that can explain his talent on the bike.

Another very important aspect with Armstrong's body is that it is able to work very hard without accumulating high lactic acid values in the muscles. Armstrong has some of the lowest levels of lactic acids ever seen during testing.²⁰ That means that Armstrong can be closer to his maximum capacity without producing too much lactic acid, meaning he can cycle faster and still be able to give the muscles enough oxygen.²¹ Most people have experienced that burning sensation in the muscles during exercise or other activities. What happens then is that the muscles do not get enough oxygen and if one continues at that activity level the muscles will eventually stop contracting and one would be forced to stop.

¹⁷ Quinn, Elizabeth. What is Vo2 max?. About. Updated December 18, 2010, http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/anatomyandphysiology/a/VO2_max.htm, accessed on 22.01.2011.

¹⁸ Nøfstad, Ole Harald. Hofstad mot o2 toppen, Langrenn.com, updated 07.10.2005, <https://langrenn.siden.as/hofstad-mot-o2-toppen.279942-1743.html>, accessed on 03.04.2011.

¹⁹ http://revelsports.com/Articles/VO2_Max.htm 16.05.2010.

²⁰ Lovgren, Stephan, The Science of Lance Armstrong: Born and Build to Win, National Geographic, updated on 22.06.2005, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/07/0722_050722_armstrong_2.html, accessed on 27.03.2011.

²¹ Burns, Robert, BALANCING ACT: ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE AND PH HEALTH IN TOP ATHLETES, acidzapper. <http://www.acidzapper.com/ph/acid-and-alkalinity/47--balancing-act-athletic-performance-and-ph-health>, accessed on 03.05.2011.

For Lance Armstrong, that sensation does not come before he is very close to extracting 100% of his potential.²² To have that ability is extremely important in cycling. It is so important because when Lance Armstrong attacks, meaning that he wants to break free of the peloton, he can recover very quickly. Since he recovers so fast he can attack again after a very short amount of time and as a result often leave the other riders behind. He won every Tour de France this way. He attacked and attacked in the mountains until nobody was left on his back wheel. He then defended the lead on the flatter stages.

It has also been reported that his heart is bigger than that of an average person. Although his heart is not so big that it would be considered abnormal it is among the top 1% of the biggest hearts in the world.²³ That is important because a larger heart is able to pump larger volumes of blood through the body and larger volumes of blood means more oxygen to his muscles. Armstrong's body is also very efficient when it comes to burning fat as energy. This is very helpful because the longer the body burns fat instead of carbohydrates the longer one can keep on going. Carbohydrates are used up much faster than fat.

While Lance Armstrong has been very lucky with his genes when it comes to some aspects of his body he has been less fortunate when it comes to other aspects. One such aspect is the composition of his muscle fibers. The amount of fast and slow muscle fibers an athlete has got is to a large degree given at his birth. Only a very small percentage of fast twitch muscle fibers can be converted to slow twitch muscle fibers. This means that a sprinter like Merlene Ottey could never have been a good marathon runner. The reason being that she simply did not have enough slow twitch muscle fibers. The slow twitch muscle fibers release energy ten times slower than fast twitch muscle fibers.²⁴ Slow twitch muscle fibers use oxygen as energy and can therefore work over a long time period. Slow twitch fibers work without oxygen and can therefore only contract a limited number of times. A good example of this is a 100-meter sprint. The athlete who competes in this event use his fast twitch muscle fibers and runs so fast that the body is not able to provide enough oxygen to the muscles. Therefore the athlete can only do a few all out 100-meter sprints during a training session.

²² Lovgren, Stephan, The Science of Lance Armstrong: Born and Build to Win, Nationalgeographic, updated on 22.06.2005, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/07/0722_050722_armstrong_2.html, accessed on 27.03.2011.

²³ Edward F. Coyle, Lance Armstrong's Physiological Maturation, edb.utexas.edu, updated in 2005, <http://www.edb.utexas.edu/coyle/armstrong.php>, accessed on 14.01.2011.

²⁴ Brianmac Sports Coach, Muscle Types. <http://www.brianmac.co.uk/muscle.html>, accessed on 14.01.2011.

During his professional career Armstrong's muscle efficiency increased.²⁵ Lance Armstrong was able to convert a higher amount of fast twitch muscle fibers into slow twitch muscle fibers than what is considered possible for an average person. The increase in slow twitch muscle fiber made him able to produce more power for a longer period of time. The reason for this is that he was able to convert some of his fast twitch muscle fibers; the ones we would use in e.g. a sprint to slow twitch muscle fibers, which is used during long endurance efforts such as riding a bike.²⁶ It also proves that determined training over a very long time period works. Armstrong's body responds very well to training.

The final physical attribute that is crucial for Lance Armstrong's ability to ride a bike is his weight. When climbing a mountain on a bicycle, like the riders do numerous times in the Tour de France, one of the most important factors for climbing speed is a rider's weight. The lighter you are the less energy you need to transport yourself and your bike up a mountain. Lance was relatively light, had lots of power in his legs and in addition he had a high Vo2 max²⁷. When Lance returned to professional cycling after cancer he was almost 7 kilograms lighter than what he had been before. His coach Chris Carmichael estimates that on one of the most famous Tour de France climbs, the Alpe d'huez, which is 13.8 kilometers long and has an average gradient of 8.1%, Lance Armstrong would be 3 minutes and 47 seconds faster because he was 7 kilos lighter than before.²⁸ Since Armstrong was lighter he had improved his power to weight ratio. A higher power to weight ratio increases the climbing speed of a rider. That is why Lance Armstrong weighed and measured everything he ate. He ate just as many calories he needed or just short of that in order to keep his weight down. If he did not have his target weight he could not drink a glass of wine or even eat a piece of chocolate for dessert.²⁹ Climbing speed is very important in the Tour de France. The race is most often decided in the Alps and the Pyrenees. A Tour de France winner has to be a good climber.

²⁵ Edward F. Coyle, Lance Armstrong's Physiological Maturation, edb.utexas.edu, updated in 2005, <http://www.edb.utexas.edu/coyle/armstrong.php>, accessed on 14.01.2011.

²⁶ Lovgren, Stephan, The Science of Lance Armstrong: Born and Build to Win, Nationalgeographic, updated on 22.06.2005, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/07/0722_050722_armstrong_2.html, accessed on 27.03.2011.

²⁸ Christopher D. Jensen. Reducing Body Fat to Increase Your Power-to-Weight Ratio. Powerbar <http://www.powerbar.com/articles/225/reducing-body-fat-to-increase-your-power-to-weight-ratio.aspx>, accessed on 27.03.2011

²⁹ RadioShack, What a Cyclist Eats. <http://www.teamradioshack.us/video-lance-armstrong-what-a-cyclist-eats/>, accessed on 17.05.2005.

Lance Armstrong has a body that is perhaps put to its absolute best use when he rides a bike. However, it is a combination of genetic luck and hard work/training that has made his body so ideal for cycling. What is interesting is that while Lance Armstrong has some of the best test results when it comes to certain aspects, he is not better than other endurance athletes in other aspects. The secret is that his overall score on all tests are very good. He does not have one clear weakness.³⁰ “It's a combination that's made Armstrong a rarity among men, but still just a man. Most athletes are happy to perpetuate the myth of the superhuman, but now that Lance is retiring, I think he'd be the first one to admit that he's not superhuman at all.”³¹ Even though Lance Armstrong might be the first to admit that he is not superhuman at all he is probably the bike rider who will come closest to being a superhuman. Lance Armstrong was good at being a perfectionist. He made the sacrifices necessary in order to be as good as possible on a bike. Other athletes just like to pretend that they are that serious, but few reach the level of professionalism that Armstrong had when it came to every aspect of cycling. Lance Armstrong writes in his book, *Every Second Counts*, “You had to be willing to look like a vampire, your body fat hovering around three-four percent, if it made you faster”.³² Armstrong weighed everything he ate and ate just what he needed during preparation for the tour de France. He was also as thorough when it came to his equipment. If a mechanic installed the seat a millimeter wrong in relation to where it should be Lance would immediately feel it and say, “who messed with my bike?”³³ His professionalism developed over time, but he was focused already at an early age. “He was keeping a planner by the time he was in eighth grade, recording his workouts and things to do for the next day.”³⁴ Not only was his body made for cycling, but Lance Armstrong also had the mind and will power to be the best.

³⁰ Lovgren, Stephan, The science of Lance Armstrong: Born and Build to Win, National Geographic, updated on 22.06.2005, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/07/0722_050722_armstrong_2.html, accessed on 27.03.2011.

³¹ Lovgren, Stephan, The science of Lance Armstrong: Born and Build to Win, National Geographic, updated on 22.06.2005, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/07/0722_050722_armstrong_2.html, accessed on 27.03.2011.

³² Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *Every Second Counts: From Recovery to Victory*, (Australia: The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, 2003), 157.

³³ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *Every Second Counts: From Recovery to Victory*, (Australia: The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, 2003), 158.

³⁴ Montville, Leigh, *Breaking Away*, Updated 07.04.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1005369/2/index.htm>, accessed on 18.03.2011.

Living symbol of Some Parts of the American Dream

According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's dictionary, the American Dream is "the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful, rich and happy if they work hard. This is of course a very short definition where many other elements lie within the definition itself. When it comes to Lance Armstrong, it is safe to say that he has "made it" in terms of being successful in sports and in business. However, the most important factor that determines if Lance Armstrong could be seen as a living symbol of the American dream is *how* difficult it was for him to achieve what he has achieved to this day.

Lance Armstrong does not come from a privileged background. That might make his life fit better into the idea of the American Dream. Since his father had left, his mother Linda raised him alone. She provided for him as best she could with the very limited budget they had. In his early years his mom had 75 dollars left after rent and day care to meet expenses.³⁵ However, he did not lack anything growing up and the relationship he has with his mother is something very special. Since Lance Armstrong had such a difficult starting point, his rise is even more impressive. It also makes his life fit better into the idea of the American Dream. When one also takes into consideration his cancer diagnosis one could say that Lance Armstrong is a fine example of the American Dream. If he can make it, almost everybody else can. Lance Armstrong also set himself high goals at an early age and worked thoroughly over a long period of time in order to reach his goals. That is an important aspect of the American Dream. One needs to be willing to work hard in order to succeed. Lance Armstrong has definitely done that.

His life as a movie

To me, the more I read about Lance Armstrong, the more his life reminds me of a movie. Lance Armstrong was viewed as an extreme talent, something he proved by winning the world championship in Oslo when he was only 21 years old; at the same time he was constantly the underdog. That did not change until after he won his first victory in the Tour de France. It is common, especially in sports and fiction that one tends to root for the underdog.³⁶ The life and career of Lance Armstrong has some similarities with the life and career of

³⁵ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 18.

³⁶ Thomas Sowell, *Dismantling America: And Other Controversial Essays*, (New York: Basic books, 2010), 231.

Muhammad Ali. “Ali’s career in the ring, much like great drama, has five acts”.³⁷ The five acts have included a fast rise to the top, multiple downfalls and a comeback that ended in success. Muhammad Ali was in 1964, at only 22 years of age, the youngest heavyweight champion of the world. He won the heavyweight title despite being a 7-1 underdog. Like Lance Armstrong he had a talent that was extraordinary. Ali has won numerous awards, including the Sports Illustrated “sportsman of the century” and BBC’s “sports personality of the century”. When Ali entered the world of boxing he set a new benchmark for everybody. It was the same when Lance Armstrong started winning the Tour de France. These two athletes were the standard to aspire to for every boxer and every cyclist. Armstrong won the Tour de France with his American racing style, which was more outgoing than the usual racing style in Europe. Ali reinvented boxing with his words. He was known as the “Kentucky lip” and by conveying his confidence verbally he drastically increased the popularity of the sport. The way Muhammad Ali promoted himself before fights was something completely new. Usually the manager or promoter did most of the talking. Many of his most epic fights were held in far away locations. The two most famous fights were held in Zaire and in Manila. The fights had nicknames “The Thrilla in Manila” and the “Rumble in the Jungle”.³⁸ Like Armstrong, Ali rose to the top very early in his professional career and then had some periods where he did not perform so well. What made Ali a true legend was a combination of his personality and his achievements in the boxing ring. Before he won the heavyweight title Ali was considered an underdog. He then established himself as the greatest boxer alive. At a later time he came out of retirement, once again as the clear underdog, but was able to win against Joe Frazier in what has been called the greatest fight of all time. It was the third and final time the two boxing giants met in the ring. This was Muhammad Ali’s Tour de France. Both Armstrong and Ali have been seen as underdogs and both have very strong personalities. Like Armstrong, Ali was the underdog, an icon and an athlete that represented his time. Both came from difficult backgrounds and rose to legend status after many ups and downs.

The Lance Armstrong foundation

Previously this thesis has explored different factors that have contributed to Lance Armstrong’s rise towards the status of an American legend. However, a lot of those factors are related to him as an athlete. How is he able to maintain his position as an American legend

³⁷ Dennis Hall, Susan G. Hall ed., American Icons: an Encyclopedia of the People, Places, and Things that Shaped our Culture (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc, 2006), 9.

³⁸ Ali.com, Rumble in the Jungle, http://www.ali.com/legend_rumble.php, accessed on 17.05.2011.

when he since early 2011 announced his definitive retirement from professional cycling? Is his position at risk and what does he do to maintain it?

One way he is able to maintain it, is as previously mentioned, through his strong involvement with his organization, the Lance Armstrong Foundation. In 1997, when Lance Armstrong was still under treatment for cancer he founded The Lance Armstrong Foundation. It is perhaps the best-known charity when it comes to cancer. The organization has a high level of transparency and a high percentage of funds going directly to fighting cancer.³⁹ This is a foundation that is dedicated to raising funds to fight cancer as well as provide help when it comes to every other aspect that is related with being diagnosed with cancer. This includes, in addition to many other fields they provide help with, political, legal and emotional support. One example of political activity is when Lance Armstrong in 2008 asked presidential candidate McCain and presidential candidate Obama to name three specific things they would do to fight cancer.⁴⁰ This happened on a national televised event. To appear on national television during a presidential candidate debate proves how popular and also how powerful Lance Armstrong is in the USA. Most interest groups, no matter what they work for would have loved an opportunity like that. Since he can be considered an American legend he was able to appear in such an important debate and put focus on his cause at practically the highest level possible.

If Lance Armstrong is an American legend he is definitely a superstar within the cancer community. One of his international bestsellers, *It's not about the bike: My Journey Back to Life*, is simply known as "the book" among cancer patients.⁴¹ This says a lot about how well known and how important Lance Armstrong and his foundation are within the cancer community. One could say that for most people Lance Armstrong is synonymous with the Livestrong organization. Initially, he used the momentum he had going for being one of the best athletes in the world to really get the organization started. Now, after he has retired the organization and his tireless fight against cancer is one of multiple factors that keep him in the media attention. By being so involved in this work he is making sure that he continues to hold the role as an American legend. I am not suggesting that this is his motivation, because

³⁹

Charitynavigator, http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?keyword_list=Livestrong&Submit2=GO&bay=search_results, accessed on 14.2.2011.

⁴⁰ Livestrong milestones, Livestrong, <http://www.livestrong.org/Who-We-Are/Our-History/Milestones>, accessed on 22.02.2011.

⁴¹ Ruibal, Sal. Cancer Survivor Armstrong Accepts New Role. USA Today, 05/22/200, <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/cycling/2002-05-22-cover-armstrong.htm> (accessed on 07.12.2010)

that is clearly not the case. His motivation is to fight cancer. However, an effect of being the face of the organization is that he keeps himself in the public eye. Lance Armstrong is not just the face of the organization in America. It could be argued that he has become a world representative for the cancer community. This claim is backed up by the fact the Livestrong has also evolved into a global foundation. Livestrong launched a global cancer campaign in 2009 as well as hosting the global cancer summit where over 500 different interest groups attended.⁴² This could possibly indicate a move from being only considered an American legend to also be seen as a global icon for the fight against cancer.

Livestrong Wristbands

In 2009 the Lance Armstrong Foundation started to go by the name Livestrong. It is a phrase that has been in use ever since the foundation started and it is a phrase that sums up the spirit of the organization as well as a phrase that represents Lance Armstrong's attitude towards life after his encounter with cancer. In addition the phrase has become known all over the world after it was printed on the yellow wristbands produced by Livestrong in cooperation with Nike. The wristbands are a fund-raising item that is sold for one dollar each. They became a huge success for Livestrong and in 2005 they had sold over 70 million bracelets.⁴³

Why did the bracelets become so popular? The obvious reason is because if you wear them you support and show that you support the fight against cancer. They bracelets are also very inexpensive at only one dollar so it is really not a question of affording the wristband or not. The most important reason for the popularity is that one can identify with the legend Lance Armstrong if one wears the band. Inherent in identifying with Lance Armstrong are a whole lot of factors; many of them have been touched upon in this thesis. You can identify with the winner Lance Armstrong by using the bracelet. This identification is increased by the fact that the wristband is yellow. The leader of the Tour de France wears a yellow jersey. For Lance Armstrong, that yellow jersey represents beating cancer and living life to the fullest. Wearing the wristband might represent some of the same for those who choose to wear it.

The bracelet also became a fashion object. It was soon after it went on sale spotted on Hollywood celebrities as well as on most of the riders in the pro tour peloton. Oprah Winfrey

⁴² Livestrong milestones, Livestrong, <http://www.livestrong.org/Who-We-Are/Our-History/Milestones>, accessed on 22.02.2011.

⁴³ Livestrong, History Timeline, <http://www.livestrong.org/Who-We-Are/Our-History/Milestones>, accessed on 22.02.2011.

was one of the many celebrities who wore the bracelet. She also made some episodes on television that focused on cancer and the work done by Livestrong.⁴⁴ To have a person like Oprah Winfrey endorse the Livestrong wristband has an advertisement value that is so high that it would be hard to even make an estimate of what it is worth. Oprah has previously been ranked as the most powerful woman in the world and was as late as in 2010 ranked as the third most powerful woman in the world behind the first lady, Michelle Obama.⁴⁵ A celebrity like Oprah would probably never have endorsed the bracelet if Lance Armstrong had not been an American Legend. That Oprah endorses the product gives the product itself as well as Lance Armstrong a positive connotation. Another example is when one of the Democratic Presidential candidates for the 2008 presidential election, John Edward, was spotted with the Livestrong bracelet while campaigning.⁴⁶ For someone who is in the running for being the American President, everything he does, from what he says to what he wears is very important. The fact that he wore the bracelet could in fact be part of his strategy. It is a fine example that shows that having a connection to Armstrong through wearing the bracelet is solely loaded with positive connotations and values. The identification factors with Armstrong when wearing that wristband are so many and so complex. Armstrong is unique in the way that his life and his accomplishments have so many different elements which enable people to relate to Armstrong for many different reasons and on many different levels.

The fact that the bracelets became so popular further strengthens Armstrong's position in America. The wristband is a physical proof of his status. There is no other athlete, celebrity or brand that have been so successful in getting their products and message out to the public the way Livestrong and Nike was able to with the wristbands. 70 million bright yellow wristbands is good publicity for the organization and for Lance Armstrong's status.

The Influence of It's Not About the Bike and Every Second Counts

As the two most important primary sources, the two books written by Lance Armstrong in cooperation with Sally Jenkins have been central to this thesis. They have provided information about Lance Armstrong on everything from his training to his personal life.

⁴⁴ Oprah Winfrey, Oprah Talks to Lance Armstrong, July issue of O, The Oprah Winfrey Magazine, <http://www.oprah.com/omagazine/Oprah-Interviews-Lance-Armstrong>, accessed on 17.03.2011.

⁴⁵ Forbes staff, The World's 100 most Powerful women, updated 10.06.2010, http://www.forbes.com/wealth/power-women/#p_1_s_arank, accessed on 23.04.2011.

⁴⁶ Mike Murphy, John Edwards in Pittsburgh, Flickr.com, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oatmeal2000/1312535279/>, accessed on 23.04.2010.

However, they have also been a central factor in building up Lance Armstrong's legend status in the U.S. The books have been just as important on their own in that respect.

The books anchored Lance Armstrong's story in America and set the foundation for his legend status. The two books were published at a time when the life story of Lance Armstrong was starting to be known in America. The story got spread as he started winning the Tour de France and when a larger percentage of the American public started watching or at least paying more attention to the Tour de France. The market for such a book about Armstrong was growing. When the first book came out in 2000 it became an international bestseller. The same happened when the sequel came out in 2003. Since the books sold so well in the U.S. and in other countries, the life story of Lance Armstrong almost become public knowledge. What was also positive for Lance Armstrong's status in the U.S. is that he is able to inform and educate the reader who is uninformed about what professional cycling and the Tour de France really is. As he is able to explain what that is and what you need to do in order to be the worlds best cyclist, he won over many people who would normally not be that interested or fascinated by him as a person.

The two books also served another need. Ever since Lance Armstrong made his successful comeback numerous books in the self-help category has been written. None of them has had any contributions from Lance Armstrong himself. Even though his two books do not necessarily fit into that category they do fill some of those aspects. It could be said that they are, to a large degree, inspirational books. The books have also been an important medium for Lance Armstrong to defend himself from the many doping accusations that has come his way. There will always be a lot of rumors and writings about a person like Lance Armstrong and it is not easy to determine what has been said or what is true or not. There are simply so many conflicting stories that it is easy to get confused. In his books Lance Armstrong addresses those issues and gives his explanation of the situation and the most serious accusations. He does so in a reflected and straightforward manner. That he is able to handle this touchy subject in a good way may have benefitted him when new accusations have arrived after this book was published. In essence, the books themselves have been very important in creating his position as an American legend.

Chapter 3

Lance Armstrong's Potential Fall

The main goal of this thesis is to analyze if Lance Armstrong is an American legend and identify the factors that have made him a legend. For everyone who has a status as an American legend it is important to act within and according to the values that have brought him or her the status. The same is true for Lance Armstrong as well. In this chapter I will explore if there are events in Lance Armstrong's life that might have been in conflict with some of the factors that have given him the status he has today. This chapter will investigate how these events have affected his status.

Armstrong as a Family Man

Lance Armstrong is very focused on his family and has also been viewed from the outside as a family man. On the cover of his book *Every Second Counts*, which was the sequel to his first book, *It's Not About the Bike*, Armstrong is photographed on top of the Tour de France podium with the yellow jersey that proves he is the winner of the Tour de France. In addition, on his shoulder he carries his son Luke who is also dressed in a yellow Tour de France jersey. He also dedicates this book to his children "Luke, Grace, and Isabelle. For always reminding me that every second counts".⁴⁷ It is no coincidence that this particular picture was chosen as the cover picture. It does, perhaps, capture the three main factors that have made Armstrong an American legend. The yellow jersey represents that he has survived and that he is definitely living. It also represents his career as a cyclist. His son Luke represents family values.

The amount of space he uses on his former wife, Kristen Richard and how respectfully he writes about her also indicates that it is a softer side to Lance Armstrong.

I felt safe with her. She liked me bald and sick with no eyebrows, and the insecurities I might have had about my hair, my scars, my body, didn't seem to matter. Kik became my hairstylist. She would take my head in her hands and gently trim my hair with a pair of clippers until I looked like a 1960s astronaut.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *Every Second Counts: From Recovery to Victory*, (Australia: The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, 2003), dedication.

⁴⁸ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 168.

She was there for him in the aftermath of his cancer diagnosis. As we read both books we get the feeling that she was absolutely crucial for Armstrong during those years. In 2003 Lance Armstrong separated from his wife Kristen and they later divorced. It was unexpected and perhaps a bit out of character for the family oriented man Lance Armstrong. How did it affect his status as an American legend?

It actually seemed like it did not affect his status too much. Much of the reason for that might be the way he writes about her and their relationship in his two books. He gives us insight into the daily routine of the Armstrong household. The image we see there is something completely different than the superstar/superhero Lance Armstrong we could see in magazines and on television. Perhaps the fact that Lance and Kristen struggled with the same things as many others do in their everyday life actually increased his status. The information about them as a couple in his two books made him more normal. What has also helped his status is that they have appeared together on numerous occasions after they got divorced, both with and without their children. For instance, in 2008, they appeared on www.runnersworld.com where Kristen interviewed Lance Armstrong before the Boston marathon. The interview was very personal and in addition to evolve around running it also said much about Lance Armstrong as a family man.⁴⁹ In the interview Lance Armstrong reflected on his career and how he spends time with his kids today. Appearances like this can hardly be anything but positive for his status as an American Legend. Lance Armstrong represents the modern man who is divorced but still manages to fulfill his duties as a father in a good way. He is now together with Anna Hansen and they have 2 kids together. Images and twitter messages relating to the Armstrong entourage are often seen. At least, what is communicated to the outside world is that they are a happy and modern family with children from different marriages. That fact that more and more marriages end in divorce and new families emerge as a result of new relationships works in the favor of Lance Armstrong.⁵⁰

During the time in between Kristen Armstrong and Anna Hansen, Armstrong did quite a bit of dating. He dated several other public figures, which obviously caused a lot of media attention. This does not match the family values Lance Armstrong represent and should be negative for his status as an American legend. It affected him negative in the short run as the

⁴⁹ Kristen Armstrong, I Got the Monk Years, runnersworld.com, <http://www.clicker.com/web/runners-world-boston-marathon/kristin-armstrong-i-got-the-monk-years-435530/>, accessed on 11.04.2010.

⁵⁰ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm, accessed 03.05.2010.

attention was on him as a celebrity and not on him as an athlete or representative for the fight against cancer. On the other side, when he finally settled down with Anna Hansen it did not seem that this period in his life had affected his status too much. One reason for that is that this sort of behavior is almost expected of a superstar like Lance Armstrong. It is possible that he is given some slack by his followers simply because he is famous. In reality he plays by different rules than the ordinary person and is therefore able to maintain his status.⁵¹

Defeat at the Tour de France

As previously mentioned Lance Armstrong returned to the sport of professional cycling in 2008 for personal reasons and to raise awareness about cancer. He wanted to compete in the Tour de France and managed to get a very impressive third place in the general classification. Although this was a very impressive comeback Lance Armstrong had lost the Tour de France. This was the race he had given up almost everything to win for seven straight years from 1999 to 2005. It was his race. Now, he was only the third best rider in the world.

A lot of his identity and legend status is tied up to his amazing career as a professional bike rider. Winning the Tour de France has been the most important factor in that respect. Some might say that he took a huge risk by entering the Tour de France once again. He could be putting some of his credibility/popularity on the line if he did not win. What made all the difference is that his attitude had changed in his comeback. He was not the cold hearted and focused Lance Armstrong one had seen during previous editions of the Tour de France. He was more open and relaxed and showing a different side of himself was positive for his popularity. This was certainly the case, especially in France. His relationship with France had been somewhat strained ever since he moved there and in particular when he started winning the Tour de France. It was like an American stealing part of the French heritage every year. When he came back in 2008 and did not win that made his popularity increase in France.⁵² The interview Lance Armstrong did right after the 15th stage of that Tour de France also helped improve his popularity among the people who for some reason had disliked him. Stage 15 was a hard mountain stage where Lance Armstrong's teammate at the time, Alberto Contador, rode away from him and it was clear that he was the stronger rider. In the interview

⁵¹ David Giles, *Illusions of Immortality: a Psychology of Fame and Celebrity*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), 103.

⁵² Owen Slot, *World in Motion: Lance Armstrong Peddles a New Agenda*, *The Sunday times*, updated on 27.06.2009, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/more_sport/cycling/article6729344.ece?token=null&offset=0&page=1, accessed on 22.04.2010.

right after passing the finish line Lance Armstrong appeared totally different than anyone had ever seen him before. He acknowledged and honored the superiority of his teammate and even said that he would gladly be his domestique for the remaining parts of the Tour de France.⁵³ It was a speech and an attitude that was very atypical for Armstrong but it showed his humility, which served his popularity very well indeed. His speech on top of that mountain, although it seemed spontaneous almost felt like something that was thoroughly thought through. It could have been Armstrong's attempt to smooth things over with the people who have been negative towards him. If he were to change some of his legacy with the ones who had been negative towards him he had to do it in 2008 before he would retire for good. Whether or not the speech was calculated to improve his popularity or not is impossible to say. What we do know is that it was positive in relation to his status in France and Europe in general and it would be safe to assume that it was positive for his status as an American legend as well.

Doping

This is not primarily a thesis about whether or not Lance Armstrong used doping to enhance his performance during his career. However, in relation to his status as an American legend, doping is potentially an issue that could ruin his status as an American legend as well as ruin his foundation. Therefore, it is relevant to examine some of the evidence/allegations that have been made against Armstrong throughout the years. This thesis will pay particular close attention to the most recent investigation where Armstrong is the focus of a grand jury inquiry in Los Angeles. This part investigates how a potential doping revelation will affect Armstrong's status.

The readers who do not follow professional cycling might be aware of the fact that doping has been a major problem in the sport and still is to some degree. What they might not know is perhaps just how common it was to use doping from the 70's and until the 90's where the drug use seemed to peak. It is relevant to give the reader a feel for how it was like when Lance Armstrong was riding in the professional peloton.

⁵³ Owen Slot, World in Motion: Lance Armstrong Peddles a New Agenda, The Sunday times, updated on 27.06.2009, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/more_sport/cycling/article6729344.ece?token=null&offset=0&page=1, accessed on 22.04.2010.

EPO

The use of a small blood sample, no more than a couple of drops drawn from the finger are a common procedure for most athletes. Such a sample can determine how much lactic acid the athlete have in his blood which again can help him determine how hard the athlete is actually working at any given time. However, the same sample can also be run through a little centrifuge that will separate the red and white blood cells. This machine tests your hematocrit level, which means that it gives a reading of the percentage of red blood cells in your blood. The red blood cells are the ones who carry oxygen to the muscles. The more you have of them the faster you will be able to ride your bike. The reason the riders did those tests, says Stephen Swart, a teammate of Armstrong in the Motorola team, was to determine the amount of EPO they would take. EPO is a drug that stimulates the growth of red blood cells.⁵⁴ The highest hematocrit level that is legal is 50, if you had a reading over that you would be banned.⁵⁵ It is now known that variation in a riders hematocrit levels indicate doping. It was important to check the riders' levels since EPO boosted the production of red blood cells. The idea was to be as close to the 50 percent limit as possible. For the riders who used EPO it was also important to check their hematocrit level to make sure they did not have too many red blood cells in their blood. If they had taken too much EPO that would increase the number of red blood cells and if the number was too high their blood would be come too thick. When the blood becomes thicker it is harder for the heart to pump the blood around and it could result in death. This is particularly dangerous at night when our heart rate drops. A combination of a slower heart rate at night and thick blood could make the heart stop. During the heyday of EPO abuse, "...professional cyclists would regularly get up during the night to spin on rollers to ensure their hearts did not slow down too much to force their thickened blood round their system".⁵⁶ This means that riders who used EPO had to get their hart rate up at night in order to make sure that the thick blood did not stop their heart. When they started moving their heart rate would go up and the blood would flow easier through their veins. There is an undocumented saying within the cycling community where some just refer to the Danish cyclist Bjarne Riis, who also won the Tour de France, as Mr. 49. He was known to be an expert at keeping his red blood cell count just below the 50 percent limit. Bjarne Riis has later

⁵⁴ Selena Roberts, David Epstein, The Case Against Lance Armstrong, Sports Illustrated, updated on 24.01.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1180944/4/index.htm> page 4, accessed on 25.01.2011.

⁵⁵ William C. Shiel Jr., Hematocrit, <http://www.medicinenet.com/hematocrit/article.htm>, accessed on 11.03.2011.

⁵⁶ Robert Sounders, Epo and Epo Tests, updated on 27.12.2007, http://www.robertsaunders.org.uk/?p=24&option=com_wordpress&Itemid=58, accessed on 11.03.2011.

confessed to using EPO.⁵⁷ Another story that shows how extreme the doping culture was in cycling also deals with the use of EPO. Swart says that they often joked about the EPO use and when they stayed in hotels they could hear the noise of riders walking about in the hallways filling their thermoses with ice from the ice machines. The riders needed ice to keep their EPO samples cold.

Unfortunately, the sport of cycling has had very serious doping problem for a long time. Especially during the 90's the number of positive doping tests in professional cycling was high. This included among other scandals the Festina affair where it was found out that at least 7 members of a team had been systematically doped.⁵⁸ All this happened right before and during Lance Armstrong's 7 straight Tour de France victories. However, Lance Armstrong has never produced a positive doping test, except for a positive one in 1999 where they found microscopic amounts of cortisone that came from a preauthorized saddle sore cream. This incidence is minor and was not a case of doping since it had been cleared with the medical staff before the start of the Tour de France. That does not mean that this discussion is over. The number of indications and allegations made against Armstrong over the years are numerous. Some of them are clearly nonsense while others are worth taking a closer look at.

"Le Mensonge Armstrong", read the headline on the front page of the French newspaper L'EQUIPE in 2005.⁵⁹ Below there was a picture of Lance Armstrong charging up a mountainside in the Tour de France. In English the headline reads, "The Armstrong Lie". It was the culmination of the bad relationship Lance Armstrong had experienced with the French for years. The story ran because in 2005 the newspaper followed a research project that worked on a new method to test for Erythropoietin, commonly called EPO.⁶⁰ The drug increases the amount of oxygen the blood can carry around the body, making it extremely effective for endurance athletes. The research project used test samples collected during the 1999 Tour de France. The newspaper got a hold of the UCI numbers (as the test samples are anonymous) on the test samples and by working out which stages they had been taken managed to figure out that the tests belonged to Lance Armstrong. In the aftermath of these

⁵⁷ Cycling news, Former Tour de France Winner Riis Admits to Doping, cyclingnews, updated on 20.04.2009, <http://www.cyclingnews.com/editions/cycling-news-flash-for-may-26-2007>, accessed on 11.03.2011.

⁵⁸ BBS Sport Online, BBC, updated on 24.10.2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/other_sports/988530.stm, Accessed on 12.02.2011.

⁵⁹ Front page of L'equipe 2005, Le Mensonge Armstrong, <http://le-grimpeur.net/blog/wp-images/lequipe05.jpg>, accessed 14.02.2011.

⁶⁰ Mark Jenkins, Rice.edu, updated on 02.2005, <http://www.rice.edu/~jenky/sports/epo.html>, accessed on 19.2.2010.

revelations the UCI appointed an investigator to look into the research project. The investigator pointed to faults in the research procedure and the test results could not be considered to be official.⁶¹

Today, the question of whether or not Lance Armstrong used performance-enhancing drugs during his Tour de France victories is even more interesting since Sports Illustrated printed an article that shook the cycling community.⁶² Sports Illustrated wrote that Lance Armstrong was now in the center of a Food and Drug Administration investigation that is headed by agent Jeff Novitzky. The fact that he is the man running this investigation is proof of just how serious the investigation is. He was the man in charge when many famous athletes, including sprinter Marion Jones and the baseball player Barry Bonds were judged for using doping in the famous Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative scandal in 2002.⁶³ This is a federal inquiry and a grand jury has been meeting in Los Angeles to hear testimonies from people who know Lance Armstrong. So far this has included former teammates, mechanics and representatives from his personal sponsors.⁶⁴ The investigation is ongoing simultaneously in several countries.

The investigation focuses on the period from 1999 to 2004 but also investigates old evidence from as far back as from the beginning of Armstrong's career. During that period Lance Armstrong rode for the American team U.S. Postal. The team was heavily sponsored by the U.S. Postal service and since the postal service is an independent agency of the federal government, Armstrong could, if found guilty of managing illegal doping activity on the U.S. postal team, be convicted of "conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering, racketeering, drug trafficking and defrauding the U.S. government. These are very serious charges and could prove to be very damaging to Lance Armstrong.

The Current Investigation

In November 2010 Italian police acting on the behalf of the agents from the Food and Drug

⁶¹ <http://le-grimpeur.net/blog/archives/9>

⁶² Selena Roberts, David Epstein, The Case Against Lance Armstrong, Sports Illustrated, updated on 24.01.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1180944/4/index.htm> page 1, accessed on 25.01.2011.

⁶³ USA Today, BALCO Investigation Timeline, updated on 27.11.2007, <http://www.usatoday.com/sports/balco-timeline.htm>, accessed on 09.04.2011.

⁶⁴ Selena Roberts, David Epstein, The Case Against Lance Armstrong, Sports Illustrated, updated on 24.01.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1180944/4/index.htm> page 1, accessed on 25.01.2011.

Administration stopped Lance Armstrong's most faithful domestique over the years, Yaroslav Popovych. When they searched his house they found documents that linked Armstrong's team to the well-known and extremely controversial Dr. Michele Ferrari. Dr. Ferrari is very controversial because he has worked with many of the best cyclists and many of them have tested positive for performance enhancing drugs and especially EPO. In addition Dr. Ferrari compared EPO to orange juice in an interview with USA Today.⁶⁵ Lance Armstrong himself said he had ended his relationship with Dr. Ferrari, but new evidence suggest otherwise. Ferrari admits seeing Lance Armstrong prior to the 2010 Tour de France. Lance Armstrong said he saw him as a friend and that they met from time to time. Any professional rider should know better than to socialize with Dr. Ferrari for any reason at all. The fact that they continued seeing each other is bad for Armstrong's credibility.

Floyd Landis is a former teammate of Lance Armstrong and also a client of Ferrari. Landis has said that Dr. Ferrari helped him transfuse his own blood in order to boost his performance. Landis has also said that one of the perks of traveling with Lance Armstrong was to fly in a private jet. According to Landis flying a private jet made it easier to transport illegal drugs because the security at the private airports were almost non-existent. Landis said this happened when they flew to Switzerland in 2003 for altitude training.⁶⁶

Steve Swart who rode together with Lance Armstrong on the Motorola team in 1995 has stated this about Armstrong and his view on using EPO, "He was the instigator. It was his words that pushed us towards doing it. It was his advice, his discussions".⁶⁷ This was at a time when the team needed results and they felt that everybody else was using the drug. Swart has admitted to using EPO, but also said that he never saw Lance Armstrong injecting EPO or buying EPO. However, it is pretty clear that he is of the opinion that Lance Armstrong not only did use EPO but also was the one who instigated the use of the drug. Tyler Hamilton, another former teammate of Lance Armstrong has just recently talked to the press about Armstrong. In an interview on the CBS program 60 Minutes Tyler Hamilton says that he saw Lance Armstrong inject EPO many times as well as seen the drug in his refrigerator. He also said that Armstrong used EPO to prepare for his first Tour de France victory in 1999. Tyler

⁶⁵ Ruibal, Sal, Armstrong Adviser Taints Tour Efforts, updated on 13.07.2004

http://www.usatoday.com/sports/cycling/2004-07-13-armstrong-ferrari_x.htm, accessed on 23.03.2011.

⁶⁶ Selena Roberts, David Epstein, The Case Against Lance Armstrong, Sports Illustrated, updated on 24.01.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1180944/4/index.htm> page 6, accessed on 25.01.2011.

⁶⁷ Selena Roberts, David Epstein, The Case Against Lance Armstrong, Sports Illustrated, updated on 24.01.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1180944/4/index.htm> page 4, accessed on 25.01.2011.

Hamilton has himself tested positive for and admitted to using EPO. Hamilton has previously refused to talk or even comment on questions relating to doping in cycling. It was first when he was subpoenaed by the grand jury in the ongoing federal investigation against Armstrong that he was forced to testify and therefore talk about these issues. At the moment there are no new transcripts from the grand jury hearing so the interview on CBS will be the first time Hamilton says this to the public. The whole interview will be broadcasted on Sunday, May 22, 2011.⁶⁸ It will definitely add momentum to the current investigation and make the situation even more severe for Armstrong. That a popular and well respected show like 60 Minutes has produced 6 episodes, including one with Tyler Hamilton, where they investigate drug use in cycling and in particular Armstrong, is bad news for Armstrong's legend status. 60 Minutes will reach a broader audience than just the ones that follow cycling and it will be damaging to his status as an American legend.

The last of the incidents that are mentioned in the article is perhaps the most interesting one. According to a source that apparently has access to the FDA investigation says that they have obtained evidence that suggest Armstrong gained access to a new drug while it was still undergoing clinical testing. The drug in question is called HemaAssist. The medicine is used on patients who have suffered extreme blood loss. Animal testing has proved that HemaAssist increase the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood. It has the same effect as EPO, but does not have the dangerous side effects.⁶⁹ Use of this drug would have been undetectable in a doping test because the drug was not yet on the market. This allegation has been around for years, it will be extremely interesting to see if the source Sports Illustrated has been in contact with is right. If it is proved that Lance Armstrong has indeed been able to utilize this drug while it was still being tested it is likely that it will effects his status in a very negative way. It would be worse than revelations about EPO use since use of HemaAssist indicates that Lance Armstrong had actively approached the drug industry in order to get the best products available. Since the drug supposedly has been used while in a testing period it indicates just how cynical Armstrong has been. A drug that is not on the market is naturally not tested for. What makes this worse for his image is that it is so calculated and cynical and breaks with everything Lance Armstrong stands for. It is a big difference if a rider takes advantage of an illegal drug that is on the market, for instance EPO, then if a rider actively

⁶⁸ Overtime Staff, Ex-Teammate: I saw Lance Armstrong use EPO, CBS, updated on May 19, 2011, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504803_162-20064406-10391709.html?tag=cbsContentcbsCarousel accessed on 19.05.2011.

⁶⁹ Ross, Tucker. The Drug of 2011? HemaAssist and Armstrong. Sportsscientist, 2011. <http://www.sportsscientists.com/2011/01/drug-of-2011-hemassist-and-armstrong.html>, accessed on 17.05.2011

seeks out drugs that are not even on the market in order to boost his performance. Both practices are illegal and immoral but the latter one is worse since it is so opportunistic and calculated. If the grand jury finds evidence that proves that Lance Armstrong did in fact use HemoAssist it would ruin his status as an American legend.

These are just one of the few cases that stand out the most from the article printed in Sports Illustrated. They deal with episodes that have been known before, but offer some new perspectives and new evidence and testimonies on some of them. It is also important to try to be fair when reading for example the testimony of former friend and teammate Floyd Landis. Floyd Landis has gone back and forth with his accusations towards Armstrong and even though he might be telling the truth about what he saw and experienced with Armstrong one must admit that his credibility is somewhat low.

It is useful and important to bring forth some of the allegations and evidence that exist towards Lance Armstrong. It is also important to see that there have been suspicious episodes also in relation to doping also before he won his first Tour de France in 1999. It is also important to take up this question and some of the episodes so that readers of this thesis who are not familiar with cycling can get a feel for what the situation around Lance Armstrong are when it comes to doping accusations.

Potential Effects of the Ongoing Investigation

The ongoing investigation would not hurt his status all that much in the short run. One reason for that is that there is in reality nothing new to Lance Armstrong. Ever since he won his first Tour de France allegations of him being doped have been present. Although not of this size, the investigation and the media attention towards Armstrong in relation to the retested urine samples from 1999 in 2005 was somewhat similar to the situation we see today. Armstrong has never tested positive and has always claimed that he races clean. That is positive and works in the favor of Armstrong. What was different then was that the retesting was done by a French lab and published in a French newspaper, which has had a grudge against him since 1999. As mentioned earlier, Armstrong's relationship with the French has been somewhat strained from the very beginning. Some of it could have to do with the fact that Armstrong is an American who also won the Tour de France in a very American way. Even though Armstrong had drawn accustomed to all the unwritten rules of the peloton he still had an American style of riding. When he first started racing in Europe he never let another cyclist

take the spot in front of him. As a result he created enemies in the peloton. In cycling one does not need that many friends in order to win, but it is almost impossible to win if you have strong enemies. When Armstrong learned to give an inch, he also learned that he made a friend. During the media attention in 2005 Lance Armstrong benefitted from the cultural differences between France and America. If one is to generalize one could say that everything French is everything not American or vice versa. On Larry King Live on CNN in 2005 Lance Armstrong said, “Do you think I'm going to trust some guy in a French lab to open my samples and say they're positive and announce that to the world and not give me the chance to defend myself? That's ludicrous. There is no way you can do that”.⁷⁰ During this case Armstrong had an easier task of defending himself, at least in relation to the American public. The test samples were re-tested as part of a research project and not in cooperation with the UCI or the World Anti Doping Agency or any other organization that should have been involved in order to make the results trustworthy. The American public understood that and as a result his status as an American legend did not change a whole lot.

The same is the case for the ongoing investigation as well. Armstrong will benefit from the outcome of the 2005 incidence, as people are passive and waiting to see what will happen next with this investigation. On the other side, the sheer number of allegations and new evidence that has come over the last years is enormous. For some of his fans these allegations might be the last straw. It might be one allegation or one new proof too many for them to continue to see Armstrong as an American legend. For others, this new investigation might just be one of the many that has been before. For them, the investigation does not really matter. They have taken a stand and stick to it as long as nothing major is revealed about their hero.

What is dangerous for his image is if the ongoing investigation concludes that Lance Armstrong was the man behind the doping use in the U.S. Postal team. That would be a blow to Lance Armstrong's legend status. However, it is likely that Armstrong and his team of followers, including everything from top end lawyers to loyal friends will be able to handle the situation so that the impact to his status would probably be less devastating than one would first assume. It could be damaging to his status in the short term, but it might not be too damaging in the long term. “Armstrong lives as he rides—surrounded by a cocoon of aides

⁷⁰ CNN Larry King Live, aired on August 25, 2005, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0508/25/lkl.01.html>, accessed on 29.03.2011.

and helpers...”⁷¹ He has people to help him handle every aspect of this investigation and Armstrong has stated that the investigation do not bother him in his daily life. It could be that the icon, the superhero, the American legend Lance Armstrong by now is so rooted in the American culture that it is almost impossible to take that away from him again.

On the other hand Lance Armstrong and his foundation are very important in the cancer community. Lance Armstrong represents hope for many cancer patients as well as people who struggle with other diseases or other problems. If it turns out he achieved those results because he used performance-enhancing drugs it would ruin the Livestrong organization. All those diagnosed with cancer that have viewed Lance Armstrong, as an inspirational figure will lose their hero. Their inspiration and belief that they too can beat cancer and move on to achieve great things is gone. I think it would be hard to run the Livestrong organization if Lance Armstrong were to be found guilty of some of the points that he is currently under investigation for. The foundation would lose its credibility. It would have been the biggest fraud in sport history if that would happen. Lance Armstrong would completely lose his status as a hero within the cancer community if there were crystal clear evidence that he did in fact dope. Since his legend status also is tied up to Livestrong that status would also suffer. However, this would only happen if there is presented, as stated above, crystal clear evidence of him using doping.

On the other side again, this investigation will probably not reveal anything new and most likely no evidence that will prove that Armstrong used doping. Even though it should happen that Armstrong is found guilty of some or all the points mentioned in the beginning of this part it would not damage his status to any great extent. The only thing that will be clear evidence of him having used doping and it is highly unlikely that such evidence will appear. It will at most be word against word and we have seen the outcome of that before. Armstrong will walk away with some of his status gone, but still be an American legend.

On May 21 some brand new information from the ongoing investigation of Armstrong reached the headlines. The grand jury had, as stated previously, been interviewing people that have been close to Lance Armstrong during his career. That has included Tyler Hamilton and Floyd Landis. The problem has been that the two riders have changed their stories back and forth and as a result lacks credibility. So far it has just been word against word and to this

⁷¹ Selena Roberts, David Epstein, The Case Against Lance Armstrong, Sports Illustrated, updated on 24.01.2011, <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1180944/4/index.htm> page 1, accessed on 25.01.2011.

point Armstrong has been the most credible. One of Lance Armstrong's best friends, a person he has called "brother", a person that has been a crucial part of Lance Armstrong's seven Tour de France victories has been called to testify before the grand jury in Los Angeles. To lie in front of a grand jury is illegal and will result in a prison sentence. Lance Armstrong's close friend and former teammate, George Hincapie did not want to risk being incarcerated and according to CBS chose to tell the truth about what he know for the first time. According to CBS George Hincapie told the grand jury that Armstrong and he supplied each other with EPO.⁷² If this is correct, the testimony of George Hincapie is a potential game changer. Hincapie has the credibility Hamilton and Landis have lacked. He has also been present throughout most of Armstrong's career. They have not only been teammates, but very good friends. If anyone know if Lance Armstrong has used performance enhancing drugs it would be George Hincapie. If the information from CBS is true, Lance Armstrong's status as an American legend is in free fall. A testimony from George Hincapie will be extremely damaging to lance Armstrong's status as an American legend. It is first when the ongoing investigation comes to an end we will know for sure how damaging it will be for Armstrong's status.

Twitter

One of the ways Lance Armstrong is maintaining his position is through the use of different social media/networking sites on line. The one he uses most frequent to communicate to the world is www.twitter.com. Twitter is a site where one can make a profile and then put out messages of 140 or less words. If one wish to read those messages one need to follow e.g. Lance Armstrong's profile. As Lance Armstrong was often one of the first athletes to use and take advantage of new technology in his training he was also quick to embrace twitter. Currently Lance Armstrong has over 2.8 million followers and has tweeted, which means he has written something, more than 6900 times. By using twitter he is able to control the information he puts out. Therefore, he can shape the image he wants people to have of him. In his tweets, he focuses on three main topics.

The first of them is Livestrong. He uses twitter as a tool to promote his charity as well as put focus on cancer in general. He informs his followers of new laws or breakthroughs in cancer research. He has also been known for organizing so-called twitter-rides in order to

⁷² CBS, updates on May 21, <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7366749n&tag=related:photovideo>, accessed on 21.05.2011.

raise money for his charity or for another charitable cause.⁷³ This is basically a charity bike race where people are invited through twitter. A lot of people show up every time. The sheer number of followers and the amount of people that shows up at his twitter rides indicate how powerful twitter is as a medium for Armstrong. What he writes on his profile will have an influence on his followers. The second group of most common tweets from Armstrong has to do with cycling or sports in general. It could be that he comments on the achievements of his former team, RadioShack, or former teammates or it could be a comment on a completely different sport or athlete. He also tweets about new equipment, which I think is very interesting for many cyclists. Most cyclists are very interested in new technology when it comes to bikes or accessories. "...I'll be an Oakley, Nike and Giro athlete for as long as I live".⁷⁴ The companies in mention produce mainly sunglasses, general sports apparel and helmets. The reason for the statement above is that those sponsors stood by Lance Armstrong when he was sick and they have all benefitted greatly from their relationship ever since that. Every one of them had the right to terminate their deals with Armstrong. None of the companies did. When Armstrong got sick he had a contract with the French team Cofidis. The team sent a representative to the U.S. to check out Armstrong's condition. Based on that meeting Cofidis terminated their contract with Lance Armstrong. The fact that the other sponsors stayed behind him could indicate that they saw something really special in Armstrong. Because of that special relationship, Armstrong is often able to give his followers a sneak peak at some new gear on his twitter profile. To have a man like Lance Armstrong mention some of their new products on twitter has very high marketing value and it makes a lot of cycling interested people follow his profile for that information in particular. The remaining parts of his tweets often have to do with or relate to his family. It could be a picture of Armstrong with his current girlfriend Anna Hansen on their date-night or a picture of the whole Armstrong entourage, kids and all, out in the back yard. Those kinds of tweets show Armstrong as a family man and it is hard to see how those messages could be anything but positive in relation to his image and status as an American legend. Family values are something that is cherished by most Americans.

Twitter is very important for Armstrong as a tool to maintain his position as an American legend. It enables him to convey his interest in Livestrong, cycling/sports in general

⁷³ ABS news, Lance's Twitter Ride Attract Thousands, ABS.net, Updated 18.01.2010, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/01/16/2793912.htm>, Accessed on 10.04.2011.

⁷⁴ Lance Armstrong, Sally Jenkins, *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2000), 124.

as well as in his family and friends. One can clearly see from many of his tweets as well as from the sheer number of tweets that it is in fact Lance Armstrong himself that is writing the messages and that he is not solely using twitter to maintain his image. When that is said, I do think he sometimes uses twitter very consciously in order to convey his own meaning on a topic or to respond to accusations that are made towards him.⁷⁵

Twitter as a Tool for Rebuilding his Image

Lance Armstrong has been accused of doping throughout his whole career. During the last couple of months a new investigation has been initiated against him. The central question of the investigation is if Lance Armstrong has used money from his team to buy performance-enhancing drugs. It is in relation to this very serious investigation I think his use of twitter can be very helpful for him in order to maintain his status. He has used twitter to combat earlier accusations made towards him.⁷⁶ His use of twitter if he gets convicted or when this investigation really heats up towards the end, will be very important for Armstrong. A good comparison and example from the world of athletes is Tiger Woods. He is perhaps the only athlete that is even close to having the same celebrity status as Armstrong. He has also always been seen as the ultimate champion, both on and off the golf course. Like Armstrong he was considered to be one of the best role models for children as well as for adults. Tiger Woods was named Sports Illustrated Sportsman of the year in 1996. Another similarity to Armstrong is that Tiger Woods also have a major endorsement contract with Nike. This indicates that both athletes have the qualities Nike wants their sportsmen to have. Tiger Woods fall was therefore hard when it got out that he had cheated on his wife on a regular basis. The fall of Tiger Woods could be compared to the fall of Lance Armstrong if he is found guilty of having bought or used drugs.

What was interesting in a segment on Tiger Woods that aired on CNN's program called Living Golf 5.2.2011 was that it was suggested that twitter was used actively in order to start the slow process of rebuilding his image in a positive way.⁷⁷ His tweets seem much more controlled than Armstrong's at the moment. While Armstrong can make a spontaneous

⁷⁵ Nathaniel Vinton, Lance Armstrong Uses Twitter to Dismiss Tour de France Doping Probe, updated on 13.10.2009, http://articles.nydailynews.com/2009-10-13/sports/17937725_1_astana-syringes-medical-waste, accessed on 13.10.2010.

⁷⁶ Nathaniel Vinton, Lance Armstrong Uses Twitter to Dismiss Tour de France Doping Probe, updated on 13.10.2009, http://articles.nydailynews.com/2009-10-13/sports/17937725_1_astana-syringes-medical-waste, accessed on 13.10.2010.

⁷⁷ CNN video interview with Tiger Woods in Dubai- whole segment will be available on line march 3 - <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/SPORT/golf/02/09/golf.tiger.woods.interview/index.html>

response if someone for example asks him a question on twitter you will rarely see Tiger Woods do the same. Interestingly, Tiger's tweets evolve around the same three topics/values that Lance Armstrong's tweet about. The topics are sport, family and his charity. Again, these are safe values and it is positive if people associate you with those topics. Twitter is a great way for him to put the message across that this is the guy I really am.

Juan Pelota

Armstrong has already used twitter as a medium to ventilate his own opinion on different doping accusations made towards him. When the Sports Illustrated article was published and it became publicly known that the FDA investigator Jeff Novitzky was leading the investigation, Lance Armstrong used his lesser-known twitter alter ego Juan Pelota to show how he felt about the investigation towards him. The name Juan Pelota is Spanish and means one ball. It plays on the fact that Lance Armstrong only has one testicle due to cancer. It is also very interesting to see that Lance Armstrong did not use his own verified twitter account to send out this particular message. In comparison to his tweets on his official channel the mood and tone of the tweet he addressed directly at Jeff Novitzky was somewhat different and out of character compared to his other tweets. It was sarcastic and perhaps right from the heart of Lance Armstrong. As a response to Jeff Novitzky when it was known that he traveled to multiple countries in Europe in relation to the investigation Armstrong wrote in Spanish on November 19, "Hey Jeff, como estan los hoteles de cuatro estrellas y el clase de business in el aeroplano? Que mas necesitan?"⁷⁸ Here, he is teasing Jeff Novitzky asking him how it is on the four star hotel and business class flights. He ends with asking him what more do you need? Under this alter ego he is able to utter his opinion in a less censured way. To write this under his verified twitter account would be out of character and also in breach with the values usually tweeted about. His verified profile is personal, but at the same time professional. That he uses this lesser known profile to write such messages also suggest that Armstrong might be even more conscious of what he writes on the verified account. Perhaps he is using twitter as a tool for maintaining his image to a larger degree than it was first believed. On his Juan Pelota profile he can be a bit more straightforward. His alter ego profile offers a great deal of insight to those who know about it.

Twitter will be even more important for Lance Armstrong if he is found guilty in the ongoing investigation. For him, like it was for Tiger Woods, it could possibly be the best way

⁷⁸ Lance Armstrong, twitter.com, <http://twitter.com/#!/juanpelota>, accessed on 03.05.2011.

to maintain his legend status or to begin rebuilding his image. For Armstrong, it might be possible to do this even if he is found guilty. Lance Armstrong has, compared to Tiger Woods, more factors than just his sport to play on when rebuilding his image. Lance Armstrong will still be a survivor long after he has retired from professional cycling. His survivor story, his achievements in the Tour de France (even though it might be proved that he used doping) will most likely be as fascinating for future generations, who do not remember this particular investigation, as it was for this generation. Twitter will be an important tool in keeping his legend status for the future.

Armstrong's Fall

In relation to one group Armstrong has already fallen. For the majority of the people who follow the sport closely, Armstrong is not a legend. For them he is a fraud and a bad seed within the sport of cycling. There is a divide between those who are very interested in the sport and everybody else when it comes to how they view Armstrong. This is because the ones who are following the sport closely has more information on what is really going on and they have been able to follow different investigations and allegations for many years. This enables them to create a picture of the teams, the rider, the doctors and the directors and from that knowledge determine which riders who are more likely to be doped and which riders that do not dope. This is of course not a scientific method or a method that proves that a rider actually dopes, but a doping conviction is not necessary in order to make up your mind about a rider. The most important factor that can be devastating to people's perception of a rider is whom they work or socialize with. For the people who follow cycling closely, everyone who has a connection with Dr. Ferrari would immediately come under suspicion. There are also many former doped riders still involved in professional cycling. Former doped rider Bjarne Riis is now the sports director of one of the best cycling teams in the world. Knowing that he is responsible for the riders on that team immediately raise a red flag. It is not positive for the sport that those individuals are still involved.

The majority of the American public does not know the athlete Lance Armstrong; they know the legend Lance Armstrong. They are not particularly interested in cycling or the Tour de France but they have heard about Lance Armstrong's survivor story and how he made a comeback where he established himself as the best cyclist in the world. One reason for that is that cycling is a very small sport in the US. In 2003 when Armstrong was at the height of his career, Chris Isidore wrote in his CNN column that, " Tour de France champ has great

popularity and endorsements even though no one watches his sport". This was written right before Lance Armstrong won his record breaking-tying fifth Tour de France victory. The headline says a lot about the popularity of cycling in the US as well as what the majority of Americans base their opinion of Lance Armstrong on. They base their opinion of him on other factors than cycling. One important factor that is related to cycling is that Lance Armstrong is identified as a winner. In 2003 a survey showed that Armstrong was known to about 72% of sports fans in the U.S. That was the same level as basket superstar Kobe Bryant and the famous tennis sisters Serena and Venus Williams. The only difference is that the Bryant and the Williams sister compete in sports that are watched by millions of Americans. For many years the Tour de France was only available on the cable station the Outdoor Life Network that in 2003 were available to around 40% of U.S. homes. The Tour de France had an average viewership of about 336.000. In an American scale that number is practically nothing.⁷⁹ Despite this Armstrong had major endorsements contracts with brands such as Coca-Cola, Nike and Subaru. It is estimated that the collective value of his endorsements was around \$16.5 million a year. For the sponsors of the best European cycling teams the main reason they choose to sponsor a team is to get their logo or brand name on television. A sponsor of one of the best teams can expect a lot of hours of television exposure during a season. Since the sponsors name is often the team name, the brand or company name is mentioned every time the commentator refers to the team. Since there is just a small majority watching cycling in the U.S. it is interesting that Lance Armstrong is so popular with sponsor. It is his success and touching personal story including most factors that have been discussed in this thesis that makes him a media sensation and an American legend. Lance Armstrong is far more popular in American than he is in France.⁸⁰ The sports fans in the U.S. and the sports fans in Europe have a completely different cultural background that influences their opinion of Lance Armstrong. For the majority of sports fans in America Lance Armstrong is an American legend, but many of the Americans who follow cycling closely share the European view of Armstrong. Lance Armstrong is not an American Legend to them.

⁷⁹ Chris, Isodore. Armstrong: Sports' invisible superstar. CNN, 2003.
http://money.cnn.com/2003/07/03/commentary/column_sportsbiz/sportsbiz/index.htm accessed on 17.05.2011

⁸⁰ Chris, Isodore. Armstrong: Sports' Invisible Superstar. CNN, 2003.
http://money.cnn.com/2003/07/03/commentary/column_sportsbiz/sportsbiz/index.htm accessed on 17.05.2011

Chapter 4

Conclusion of this Thesis and How it has Contributed to Knowledge

In this thesis the main goal has been to identify some of the most important factors that have contributed to Lance Armstrong's rise towards the status as an American Legend as well as factors that enable him to maintain his status. Towards the end the thesis dealt with the potential fall of Lance Armstrong in the light of an ongoing investigation involving serious charges related to performance enhancing drugs. What are the conclusions made in this thesis?

The most important finding that has been presented in this thesis is that Lance Armstrong is a superhero. He shares many of the characteristics commonly found in fictional superheroes. These similarities have been present ever since his childhood. Not even cancer, crashes or allegations of doping seems to slow him down. One of the factors that have made him an American legend is that he has many of the same traits as a fictional superhero. The fascination and interest many people have for the fictional superhero, such as superman, also applies to Lance Armstrong. His performance on the bike is seen as being right in the crossing between what is possible for a normal human being and what is only possible for a superhero. His willpower and determination is two very important words that one could use to describe how Lance Armstrong has made it. Like a superhero, he gets things done because he wants to. His seven wins at the Tour de France is a good example of how powerful his determination is. Another vital factor that has contributed to his popularity is that he represents hope and is also a symbol of someone who maximizes life. Lance Armstrong makes the best out of life and is therefore a role model and inspiration for many people who seek to make their own lives better. Also like a superhero, Lance Armstrong is a survivor. He simply refuses to die and seem to be able to bounce back from virtually anything whether it would be a physical or mental problem. He represents immortality and invulnerability as well as the desire to keep up the pace even though he is getting older. That aspect is very appealing to many people who want to keep their lives active for as long as possible. As many superheroes, Lance grew up without a father and therefore had to figure out his powers or talents on his own. He had to learn the hard way, which made him tough. It is impossible to separate Lance Armstrong as a

cancer survivor from Lance Armstrong as an athlete. They are intertwined and Lance Armstrong has been dependent on both aspects in order to rise to the status of an American legend.

When it comes to the physical attributes of Lance Armstrong it is his overall high-test score on all the important aspects involved in pedaling a bike forward that makes him so fast. The fact that he is not weak in one single aspect makes him a very hard to beat. It is a combination of sheer luck with his genes as well as hard work over a long period of time that have made him a good cyclist. The second factor that perhaps has been the most important one in relation to his success as a professional bike rider is his mind. Lance Armstrong has one of the best minds in sport. He has the ability to be mentally strong and that enable him to do whatever is necessary to be the best bike rider. If that means living a life other people would see as insane, he would do it. Lance Armstrong would make all the sacrifices that was needed in order to win the Tour de France. His mind is of a caliber one does not see too often in the world of sports.

Lance Armstrong's life fits into some parts of the American dream. This has been important for his rise since the idea of and belief in the American dream in the USA is very strong. His unprivileged background, his cancer diagnosis and self-made rise to the very top of professional cycling are a success story almost unprecedented in the world of sports. His life story is entertaining and is almost movie-like. His two books have also been an important as they have enhanced many of these aspects and that have further strengthened his status as an American legend. In much the same way the social media net site twitter has been a crucial factor in maintaining his status. He focuses on three of the most important values already associated with his name. The values he writes the most about on his twitter feed is Livestrong, family and sports. Again, values that you cannot go wrong with and values that people can relate to. It is also a medium that enables Lance Armstrong to remain in the spotlight as well as a medium everybody interested in can access. Twitter will continue to be important for Armstrong in relation to his image and for his organization. It will be especially important when the ongoing investigation relating to doping heats up. It can serve as a tool to rebuild his image if that is necessary.

When it comes to Lance Armstrong's potential fall there have been several factors that have been potential threatening to his status. Lance Armstrong's separation from his wife Kirsten Richards did not harm his image in a major way. In fact it seemed that it strengthened

it. Even though his separation was out of character and in conflict with one of the values that had brought him to legend status it also showed nuanced picture of Armstrong. For people to read in his two books that a man like Lance Armstrong, who seemed to have it all, also struggled to juggle a professional life and family life made him closer to his followers. It became even easier to relate to him, which again was positive for Lance Armstrong's status. His defeat in the Tour de France was a setback to his status in the short run, but Lance Armstrong managed to regain most of the status he had lost because of his loss at the Tour de France. His status is so deeply rooted in the American culture that Lance did not have to win in order to keep his legend status.

When it comes to doping allegations it is a fact that Lance Armstrong has never tested positive for anything. He has also always stated the he has never used performance enhancing drugs. However, the sheer number of testimonies and evidence suggest that the truth may be something else. The main goal of this thesis has not been to judge whether or not Lance Armstrong has used performance-enhancing drugs or not. This thesis has explored how the recent investigation will influence Armstrong's legend status. His status as well as his Livestrong organization is at stake. The most likely outcome is that Lance Armstrong, in the long run, will keep his status as an American legend. His position within American culture, the team he surround himself with and a long history of doping allegations that have never ended or concluded in anything, suggest that he will survive the current investigation as well. As long as the code of silence is held within the cycling community his status will be relatively safe. By that I mean that he will most likely keep his status as an American legend even though he gets convicted for one or more of the charges he is currently under investigation for.

For many of the sports fans Lance Armstrong is not considered a legend at all. There is a divide between those who follow the sport closely and those who do not. The majority of Americans falls into the second category and therefore has more positive view of Lance Armstrong. For them, lance Armstrong's legend status is based on other aspects than it would have been in Europe. Their view of Lance Armstrong is based on the overall impression of Lance, his personality and his story. For them Armstrong is a true American legend. For those who go beyond that information and have followed his professional career more closely, Armstrong would not be seen as a cycling legend, but could still be seen as an American legend by many.

Brand new developments in the ongoing investigation have made the situation for Lance Armstrong much worse. The testimony of his good friend George Hincapie has changed the situation. George Hincapie is a very strong and credible witness and the information he provides the grand jury will cause Lance Armstrong's downfall. The testimony of George Hincapie is the single most important and threatening event that has happened to Lance Armstrong so far and it will result in Lance Armstrong's fall as an American legend.

How this Thesis can Serve as a Starting Point for Future Research

In order to find a new and interesting angle that could help to further understand why Lance Armstrong has become an American legend this thesis explored the literature relating to superheroes. This thesis explored that angle in one chapter. It could be interesting to see a thesis that fully concentrated on the information one could find in the cross section between Lance Armstrong and the fictional superhero. It could also be interesting to see the same angle used on other athletes or other high profile people that would suite such an angle.

Another topic I touch upon in my thesis is the importance of the Livestrong organization within the cancer community. Further research could be done on exactly how important the organization is for the cancer cause in general. How much influence do they have when it comes to the political scene, research and awareness? What is the role of Lance Armstrong in all of this? This topic alone could serve a whole thesis.

Yet another possible vantage point for further research is to take a closer look at Lance Armstrong and his relationship with his long time sponsors such as Nike, Giro and Oakley. His organization would also be relevant to draw in here as well since Livestrong has cooperated withal three of the companies above in producing sportswear of some kind. It would be interesting to see a thesis that took a closer look at to which degree Lance Armstrong is the athlete in the world who has been most successful in incorporating his charity with commercial products.

What I would find the most interesting when it comes to further research that comes of this thesis is a thesis that deals with the same issue that I have tried to explore here when it comes to Lance Armstrong's potential fall from legend status. When the ongoing investigation discussed in this thesis is over a lot of new material will be available. It will also be more accurate information on how a potential conviction of some of the charges would

affect his charity and his status as an American legend. Such a thesis would also increase the value of this thesis when it comes to knowledge about how Lance Armstrong became an American legend.

This thesis could also serve as an inspiration to a thesis that seeks to investigate how, for instance a politician, has become especially famous or cherished. It could be possible to use the same theme as in this thesis in order to find some factors that have contributed to the status that person has today.

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